ONLINE TEACHING PRACTICUM: ELUCIDATING STUDENT TEACHERS' PERCEPTION AND IMPROVEMENT IN ELT

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Abstract: Conducting teaching practicum during the Covid-19 Pandemic has become big challenges for the student teachers because it changes many aspects of human life including the educational aspect. This requires student teachers to have more preparation for teaching because they have to make the materials, strategies, and media are appropriate for the current situation in English Language Teaching (ELT). Therefore, this study aims to investigate the student teachers' perception also improvement perceived toward the implementation of their teaching practicum at the graduate level at one of the state universities in East Java, Indonesia. Survey with a qualitative approach was used as the research design. The participants were 38 student teachers who have taken teaching practicum course in the third semester. A close-ended questionnaire and Interviews were used to see the student teachers' perception and improvement of the implementation of their teaching practicum. In analyzing the data from the questionnaire, the researchers classified the scale (1-2) indicates negative and (3-4) indicates positive perception and improvement perceived towards the implementation of teaching practicum. Meanwhile, the data from the interviews were analyzed thematically. The results of data analysis show that the student teachers have a positive perception. Also, the student teachers perceived improvement of the implementation of teaching practicum. This study will be used as the references for the practitioner, curriculum developer, and the teacher in higher education to consider the student teachers' perception towards the implementation of the teaching practicum.

Keywords: *implementation; improvement; student teachers' perception; teaching practicum.*

INTRODUCTION

In preparing the student teachers in the educational system nowadays, the faculty in some universities prepared one course to train the students for having experience in the teaching and learning process. As the initial steps, they need to embrace their teaching knowledge, skills, and abilities before field experiences. It is seen as long-term investments and assets in an educational context, they hold the responsibility to form a better generation (Kusumaningrum, 2018). Teaching practicum is one of the courses that must be taken by student teachers in the third semester of their master's program. This course helps graduate students to develop their knowledge of practical teaching strategies including the use of media through demonstration, peer teaching, micro-teaching, and their skills in conducting teaching and learning interactions of different patterns such as individual, pair, group work, giving drills, questioning, and classroom management. Based on the catalogue which is published by the faculty in one of the state universities in East Java, Indonesia. Student teachers of the regular class are assigned to practice the real teaching in two courses which consist of content and skill courses that offered in the undergraduate program of the Department of English. The student teachers are expected to be able to teach the students in undergraduate program professionally. Each course required 4 meetings at least involving the students in the teaching and learning process. In this regard, the student teachers have full responsibility to practice the theories in a real environment and help students to gain an understanding of the materials. Furthermore, student teachers are expected to dedicate their time and effort to develop and strengthen their students in creative thinking. This can create the students to have positive attitudes toward the teaching and learning process in the classroom (Wambugu, Barmao, & Ng'eno, 2013).

Teaching practicum also gives opportunities to the student teachers to develop and improve their professional practice in the context of a real classroom (Pratiwi, Saukah, Rachmajanti, & Anugerahwati, 2020). It is also a compulsory course that must be taken by the student teachers in the university. However, some universities in Indonesia do not provide teaching practicum course for their student teachers because they have experience when they were in undergraduate level. To begin with, it will be really challenging for the student teachers because they will have experiences in teaching university students formally during the Covid-19 pandemic. They have to build effective communication and not too long to speak in one direction. Therefore, student teachers need to prepare the materials in creative ways to attract students' interest in learning the materials being taught (Hermanto & Srimulyani, 2021). Furthermore, the student teachers also had been prepared by some courses that they have been taken in the first and second semesters. Thus, they have to be able to implement the theories and principles that is suitable to teach nowadays.

In response to this case, it becomes big challenges for the student teachers in conducting the teaching practicum during the Covid-19 Pandemic. It happens because the outbreak changes many aspects of human life including the educational aspect. The student teachers need more preparation for teaching because they have to fix the materials, strategies, as well as the media for teaching their students. The course becomes more challenging because they have to practice their teaching practicum not face to face. Yet, the teaching and learning process must be conducted online through some platforms (Google Classroom,

Zoom, Quizizz). Each platform with each of its features represents distinctive characteristics and functions (Amin & Sundari, 2020; Mansur & Asmawati, 2021). Furthermore, the student teachers do not have the experience to teach university students yet, there is no micro-teaching course for them. It leads the curiosity of the researchers about the student teachers' perception and improvement in their teaching practicum. The researchers viewed that knowing the student teachers' perception and improvement towards their teaching practicum is necessary because what they gained from their teaching practicum affect the way how they teach in the future. Thus, by conducting this current study, the researchers expect will give beneficial impacts for English Language Teaching.

Previous studies that have been discussed about teaching practicum only shed light on student teachers' perspectives of teaching practicum (Ozek, 2009), failure to fail in a final pre-service teaching practicum (Danyluk, Luhanga, Gwelwerere, MacEwan, & Larocque, 2015), practicum stress and coping strategies (Mahmoudi & Ozkan, 2016), student teachers' practicum and policy recommendation (Sulistoyo, Mukminin, Abdurrahman, & Haryanto, 2017), the influence of the learning environment on the quality of learning, (Bruno & Dell'Aversana, 2017), perception of pre-service teachers towards teaching practice program (Amankwaah, Agyen, & Sam, 2017), pre-service teachers' perception of teaching future EFL students: A micro-ethnography approach (Kusumaningrum, 2018), student teachers' reflections on their teaching practicum (Koksal & Genc, 2019), EFL pre-service teachers' perception of online teaching practicum during a pandemic, (Shinta & Aprilia, 2020). Most of them were conducted in higher education especially in the undergraduate program (i.e, a study conducted by Danyluk et al., 2015; Mahmoudi & Ozkan, 2016; Sulistoyo et al., 2017; Amankwaah et al., 2017; Kusumaningrum, 2018; Koksal & Genc, 2019; Shinta & Aprilia, 2020).

However, one study was conducted on the graduate program in the other country (I,e, a study conducted by Amankwaah, Agyen, & Sam, 2017). Although there are several studies that discussed about student teachers' perception of their teaching practicum, unfortunately, the study in Indonesia discussed about student teachers' perception and improvement at the graduate level is still scarce. Thus, the student teachers' perception and improvement towards the implementation of the teaching practicum in the graduate program still becomes a question. Therefore, it is necessary to explain about the student teachers' perception and improvement in graduate level since they are prepared to be educators. Besides, the implementation of the teaching practicum during the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic will automatically give precious experiences for them which will be interesting to be shared to others. Relevant to the reason mentioned, this study is formulated the research questions into the following:

1) How is the student teachers' perception towards the implementation of their teaching practicum?
2) Do the student teachers perceived improvement towards the implementation of their teaching practicum?

The answer of the research questions above will be used as the references for the practitioner, curriculum developer, and also the teacher in higher education

especially in master program to consider the student teachers' perception towards the implementation of the teaching practicum.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a survey research design with a qualitative approach. This research design is typically used to describe opinions, attitudes, preferences, and perceptions of people of interest to the researchers (Latief, 2019). In this study, in which the researchers aimed to investigate the student teachers' perception and improvement perceived in their teaching practicum, a survey was the appropriate research design to be implemented.

Subjects

This study involved all of the student teachers in Universitas Negeri Malang. The participants were 38 graduate English Language Education students in the academic year 2020/2021, Faculty of Letters, who had taken a teaching practicum course. In this case, the researchers took the entire population as the participants to respond to the survey distributed. As stated by Creswell (2012) it is possible to involve the whole population in survey research because the number of the population is small. Therefore, in this study, the researchers did not apply the sampling technique because it is not necessary to be applied. However, in choosing the participants for the interview, the researchers chose them based on their score of the questionnaire. One student who has positive perception and one student who has negative perception in teaching practicum. It is expected to see their different perceptions toward teaching practicum.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

To collect the data, the researchers used a close-ended questionnaire which was adapted from Shinta and Aprilia (2020). Furthermore, the researchers also applied interview to gain a detail data related to the student teachers' perception and improvement towards the implementation of teaching practicum. As stated by Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, and Razavieh (2010) there are two kinds of instruments that can be used in survey research, questionnaire and interview. Therefore, the researchers employed a close-ended questionnaire and interview to obtain the data. In the intention, the result of the close-ended questionnaire was used to give a general picture about the student teachers' perception and improvement perceived towards the implementation of teaching practicum. Moreover, the result of the interview was used to give a detail explanation to prove the result of the questionnaire distributed. The interview was carried out online since the data were taken during Covid-19 pandemic. It done online via WhatsApp individually.

In analyzing the data from the questionnaire, the researchers classified the scale (1-2) that indicates negative perception toward the implementation of teaching practicum. Furthermore, the researchers also classified the scale (3-4) that indicates positive perception and improvement perceived towards the implementation of teaching practicum **(**Wambugu, Barmao, & Ng'eno, 2013**)**. Meanwhile, the data from the interviews were analyzed thematically (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The current study aims to investigate the student teachers' perception and improvement perceived towards the implementation of the online teaching practicum program. Based on the data collected from the questionnaire and interviews, the research findings are presented as follows:

Student teachers' perception of the implementation of online teaching practicum

No	Statement	Positive	Negative
1.	Adequate duration for online teaching practicum	87.09%	12.90%
2.	Sufficient planning for the practicum	96.77%	3.22%
3.	Sufficient orientation of implementation and roles in the practicum	96.77%	3.22%
4.	No difficulty in managing the classroom during practicum	51.61%	48.38%
5.	Conducive online teaching and learning process	77.41%	22.58%
6.	Ease of using various instructional media during the practicum	74.19%	25.80%
7.	Sufficient cooperation with the supervisor	100%	0%
8.	Sufficient cooperation with the mentor	100%	0%
9.	No difficulty in doing assessments during the practicum	77.41%	22.58%
10.	No difficulty in providing feedback during the practicum	87.09%	12.90%
11.	Feeling confident during teaching practicum	90.32%	9.67%
	Average	**85.33%**	**14.66%**

Based on the data analysis from the questionnaire, it shows that the student teachers have positive perceptions of the implementation of online learning teaching practicum. It can be seen by the following description statements. The adequate duration for online teaching practicum is 87.09%. Sufficient planning for the practicum is 96.77%. Sufficient orientation of implementation and roles in the practicum is 96.77%. No difficulty in managing the classroom during practicum is 51.61%. Conducive online teaching and learning process is 77.41%. Ease of using various instructional media during the practicum is 74.19%. Sufficient cooperation with the supervisor 100%. Sufficient cooperation with the mentor 100%. No difficulty in doing assessments during the practicum 77.41%. No difficulty in providing feedback during the practicum 87.09%. Feeling confident during teaching practicum 90.32%. Furthermore, other results were found from the interviews. Student 2 mentioned that the teaching practicum program is really helpful because it can equip and train them to familiar with the teaching at the undergraduate level. It can be seen by the following statement:

> *"It really helps because the purpose of this teaching practicum program is to equip and train us to get used to teaching undergraduate students". (S2)*

Relevant to the statement above, Student 1 also gives disagreement when the teaching practicum is not implemented for the graduate program. She said:

> *"I do not agree, I will know nothing, the vibes of students at school and students in higher education level are different, so this experience must be existed". (S1)*

Those statements show that students agree with the implementation of the teaching practicum program at the graduate level. However, the implementation of teaching practicum program needs to add the meeting hours. As stated by Student 1:

> *"In my opinion, the teaching practicum program can add the meeting hours because 4 meetings are not enough". (S1)*

Furthermore, a host lecturer gives more schedules to students so it is hard to set up the schedules.

> *"It might be a bit difficult to adjust the schedule, and even in one of those courses I was asked to teach until the end of the semester". (S2)*

It can be concluded that the implementation of the teaching practicum program is not in accordance with the initial regulations, where student teachers are required to teach at least 4 meetings. Moreover, Student 2 also states that the implementation of online teaching practicum is not optimal, she gives the reasons in the following statement:

> *"Actually, the implementation of online learning can be said to be good, but maybe not optimal. For example, in the face-to-face classroom, we can make group discussions so that the material maximally delivered we can get more bonding feelings". (S2)*

Connected to the statement above, Student 2 states that the undergraduate students in the classroom do not actively speak because she taught in a classroom with small students.

> *"It is difficult to get them to actively speak because it is only a few students and my subject is a pretty heavy course". (S2)*

So, in this teaching practicum program, student teachers are required to be able to solve the problems they faced in real classrooms. However, the host lecturer still gives encouragement and feedback after finishing the meeting in teaching practicum program. It can be seen by the following statements:

> *"My host lecturer was great in giving encouragement. However, when it comes to content and learning, such as the materials we will teach, the host lecturer told us to look for it by ourselves". (S1)*

> *"After 4 meetings the lecturer asked me and my friends who teach in his class to have a virtual meet in Zoom Meeting, we reflected together so the feedback is at the end of the meeting". (S2)*

This teaching practicum program also makes student teachers feel confident, as stated by Student 2 and 1 in the following statements:

> *"It is a must to be confident because this teaching practicum program required us to be confident. As educators we have to be confident so that we can instruct students". (S2)*

> *"Personally, I am confident. So, our self-confidence was honed there, at first it might be a bit awkward, but after the second meeting and so on, we started to dare to improvise in the classroom". (S1)*

Student Teachers Perceived Improvements in Online Teaching Practicum

No	Statements	Positive	Negative
12.	Online teaching practicum has deepened my interest in teaching	93.55%	6.45%
13.	Online teaching practicum has equipped me with the necessary teaching skills	96.77%	3.22%
14.	Online teaching practicum has helped me improving teaching knowledge	100%	0%
15.	Online teaching practicum has helped me improving the use of teaching methods	96.77%	3.22%
16.	Online teaching practicum has developed my lesson-planning skills	96.77%	3.22%
17.	Online teaching practicum has established foundation for my future profession	100%	0%
18.	Online teaching practicum has improved my teaching experience	100%	0%
19.	Online teaching practicum has helped me to get new ideas on teaching	100%	0%
20.	Online teaching practicum has prepared me enough to be a good English teacher	93.55%	6.45%
	Average	**97.49%**	**2.51%**

Table 2 shows that student teachers perceived improvements in online learning teaching practicum. It can be seen from the average of these statements, 97.49%. The following is the description of each statement: Online teaching practicum has deepened my interest in teaching 93.55%. Online teaching practicum has equipped me with the necessary teaching skills 96.77%. Online teaching practicum has helped me improving teaching knowledge 100%. Online teaching practicum has helped me improving the use of teaching methods 96.77%. Online teaching practicum has developed my lesson-planning skills 96.77%. Online teaching practicum has established foundation for my future profession 100%. Online teaching practicum has improved my teaching experience 100%. Online teaching practicum has helped me to get new ideas on teaching 100%. Online teaching practicum has prepared me enough to be a good English teacher 93.55%. Furthermore, the data from interviews show that teaching practicum program helps them to deepen their interest in teaching. It can be seen by the following statement:

"I really agree that it is mandatory to be implemented, especially for students who take education major. So, it is really good and well organized if it is given to graduate students because it will definitely help them a lot". (S2)

Furthermore, the teaching practicum program also improves the teaching experience for student teachers and develops their soft-skills in teaching English.

"It gives us teaching experience, especially in higher education level". (S1)

"With this teaching practicum program, it is really a place for me to develop my soft-skills in teaching". (S2)

In line with the statements above, Student 2 states that the implementation of the teaching practicum program teach her to think critically and what kind of strategies can be used in the classrooms:

"I can also learn how to think critically, learn how to analyze what kind of strategy or technique I can use because today's university students are very creative, highly creative, they know how to solve problems and have a lot of insight". (S2)

DISCUSSION

In this section, the researchers seek to discuss the findings by comparing and contrasting them with the previous studies related to the implementation of teaching practicum. In this current study, the researchers first seek to attempt in investigating student teachers' perception towards the implementation of teaching practicum. Secondly, the researchers looked at the improvement perceived by the students in the implementation of teaching practicum. Moreover, based on the data analysis of questionnaire responses, it was found that the student teachers had positive perceptions of the teaching practicum program. Thus, the findings of this current study supported the findings found by Shinta and Aprilia (2020). They conducted a study about undergraduate students' perception towards the implementation of teaching practicum. They also employed a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to gather the data. The findings also proved that most of the students had positive perceptions towards the implementation of teaching practicum and also perceived positive improvement because of the existence of teaching practicum.

In relation to the data analysis of questionnaire responses, it was obtained that the student teachers had perceived improvement in the teaching practicum program. It can be seen from the questionnaire analysis average of the statements, it was 97.49%. It supported the findings from a study conducted by Rahmani (2021) which found more than 50% of students who participated in the research agreed that despite of the challenging situations they faced during teaching practice, they gained the teaching practicum beneficial in providing broad teaching insight and experience. The finding revealed that the result of the questionnaire analysis showed a greater percentage that indicates student teachers have positive perceptions towards the implementation of teaching practicum. They believed that the existence of the teaching practicum is really helpful with some notes. They are expected that the time allotment can be added, the regulations can be set well, etc.

Besides Amankwah, Oti-Agyen, and Sam (2017) revealed that on-campus teaching practicum equips student teachers with requisite teaching knowledge, skills, experience, efficacy, professional development, and support for their learning. Lack of teaching aids, inadequate time, poor planning, lack of administrative support, and lack of proper orientation on the role of on-campus teaching practice were some of the challenges identified. Based on the result of the interview, it can be inferred that the students also believed that the existence of the teaching practicum facilitates them to experience the teaching atmosphere, especially among higher education undergraduate students. Instead of the weaknesses of its implementation, it also helped them to improve their teaching knowledge, lesson planning skills, teaching methods, etc. Therefore, these findings implied that teaching practicum also brought some benefits for the student teachers in the graduate program.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study investigated student teachers' perception and improvement of the implementation of the teaching practicum program in the graduate program. The results revealed that the student teachers have positive perceptions of the implementation of online teaching practicum. Furthermore, this study also revealed that the student teachers perceived improvement towards the implementation of teaching practicum. However, the researchers also realize that this current study is still needed improvement. In terms of data collection technique, this current study only employed a questionnaire and interviews. Therefore, the implementation of another instrument may influence the findings. Accordingly, future studies are also still needed to be conducted in this area in different contexts.

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